



THEORETICAL MODEL: ORGANIZING COMMUNITY CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN MOUNTAINOUS DISTRICTS OF THANH HOA PROVINCE, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

The mountainous area of Thanh Hoa, Vietnam comprises 11 districts, which are the main inhabited areas of ethnic minorities. Compared to the plains, urban and coastal areas, mountainous areas are the most difficult ones; however, in the cultural field, mountainous areas have a good preservation of unique values. Nevertheless, the organization and management of community cultural activities are facing a large number of difficulties and challenges. In the current context, in order to preserve the values of traditional community culture and access to new types of culture in a positive way, it is necessary to form a system of criteria, select specific community cultural activities to help local managers regularly organize and stabilize community cultural activities. On the other hand, it also helps ethnic minorities retain their nuances and have effective conservation and development strategies, as well as maintain community cultural spaces and meet the needs of cultural enjoyment of the people in the area.

KEYWORDS: Criteria, mountainous areas of Thanh Hoa, types of community culture.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE NATURE, CULTURE-SOCIETY IN MOUNTAINOUS AREAS:

The mountainous region of Thanh Hoa is a large area occupying three quarters of the area and one thirds of the province's population, with 11 districts and 7 ethnic groups living together: Kinh, Muong (364,622 people), Thai (223,165 people), Mong (14,917 people), Dao (6,215 people), Tho (11,530 people) and Kho Mu (978 people). Located in an important strategic position with the Western corridor bordering the Lao People's Democratic Republic with a border length of up to 192km; the North and Northwest bordering Ninh Binh, Son La and Hoa Binh; the South bordering Nghe An; the mountainous region of Thanh Hoa, although, assessed as a potential area, it has not been properly exploited and promoted its values. Therefore, compared to other localities in the plains and coastal areas, the mountainous region of Thanh Hoa is still facing a large number of difficulties in economic, and cultural-social life.

In the mountainous areas, there are a lot of key routes to travel to other areas in the province, and more importantly to have access to different provinces in the country and a number of countries in the region. Specifically, Route 15A connects the region with the Northern and Southern districts; Route 217 is connected with Hua Phan (Laos), other horizontal routes such as national highways 47, 45... are connected with Thanh Hoa city, National highway 1A, and the districts in the Delta. Specifically, the legendary Ho Chi Minh route, which is considered as the backbone, the hub for exchanges among the districts in the region as well as between the region and the Northern and Southern provinces, has been constructed and put into use. However, in order to have access to remote communes and villages, it is necessary to pay more attention to improving the transportation. In consideration of the history of establishment, the residential units such as villages and hamlets of ethnic minorities in the area were formed very early. Muong people in Thanh Hoa are identified as originated from ancient Vietnamese people; Kho Mu People is known to have lived for a long time in the Northwestern mountains and the North Central region of Vietnam (including Thanh Hoa province); in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Mong people began to migrate from the Northern provinces of Vietnam to Thanh Hoa...

The appearance and different settlement of ethnic groups in the historical process is the important basis in forming customs, lifestyles, and more broadly, the emergence of a cultural environment which is unique and distinctive for each nation. Over time, cultural values have been created and resonated with the process of exchanges and contacts among peoples in the same living space, which has contributed to the formation of good and progressive cultural values, and help people – subjects in creation, enjoyment, transmission, preservation of culture be more aware of traditional cultural values of their ethnic communities in the overall cultural nuances of Thanh Hoa as well as of Vietnam.

In order to enhance the solidarity of the community, culture is considered an important factor; more specifically, it is the cultural life at the local community which is primarily from community cultural activities. Therefore, in the management and organization of community cultural activities at the local community, the deep understanding of the elements, cultural types, methods of organizing cultural activities in the locality are important to ensure and maintain the daily cultural life of the people in their living space.

Community culture is a term referring to the cultural connotation of a group of social entities with the same cultural goals and content. This connotation is often construed as a goal of building a contemporary culture associated with each existing community group in accordance with Vietnam's current goals of building the local cultural life. Through the building of cultural life at the locality, cultural factors and human factors have been promoted, which creates a driving force for economic development, contributes to poverty reduction and addresses social and policy issues. The process of implementing the policy of building cultural life at the locality has significantly contributed to achieving of cultural development goals, deepening the culture in all social activities, gradually building up civilized lifestyle and healthy cultural environment; contributed to preserving and promoting the good values of the national culture, improving the spiritual life of people of different social classes.

Each community has its own cultural characteristics, derived from single elements that make up the common culture of the community; therefore, the community culture is very diverse and depends on cultural enjoyment needs of its member, cultural environment and cultural relations. Each of these factors in different communities will bring different nuances which create unique cultural characteristics of each community.

Community culture is the place where large numbers of people gather for the purpose of cultural exchange. Community culture does not discriminate whether you are a member of any community; it is merely interested in whether or not you share the same values. Community culture is a factor that all communities have, which makes it become an indispensable element.

The results of different research works on ethnic cultures in the mountainous areas of Thanh Hoa show that this region still preserves a large number of unique and diverse traditional cultural values, and most activities take place in the form of community cultural activities. The most outstanding are festivals such as Festival Muong Don (Thanh My commune, Thach Thanh district), Festival Khai Ha (Muong ethnic group), Festival Nang Han (Thuong Xuan district), Festival Dinh Thi (Nhu Xuan district), Festival Muong Xia (Son Thuy commune, Quan Son district), Festival Cam Muong (Van Nho commune, Ba Thuoc district), Festival Muong Kho (Ba Thuoc district), Festival Muong Ca Da (Quan Hoa district), Festival Tu Ma Ten Tan (Muong Lat district), Meo Pagoda Festival (Quang Hien commune, Lang Chanh district), Temple of Princess of the Forest Festival and white buffalo sacrifice (Van Xuan commune, Thuong Xuan district), Festival Ban Bua (Ngoc Lac district)...

Folk games in mountainous areas are quite diverse. They are cultural activities that attract a large number of participants. Most of the games associated with the festival are considered to be the "soul" of ethnic minorities in Thanh Hoa, contributing to preserving cultural nuances and connecting the community. For ethnic minorities, folk games are a precious cultural heritage handed down, preserved and having strong vitality in daily life. Several games are regularly held by villagers every spring, such as swinging, bamboo jacks, spinning tops, tug of war... These are also games that are easy to organize anytime, anywhere with easy-to-find and easy-to-make tools which are mostly from nature. Currently, in

order to preserve and promote the cultural identity of ethnic groups, and unite people to build a cultural life, it is necessary for all levels and localities to pay attention to restoring and regularly organizing folk games in traditional festivals. Folk songs, folk dances and other types of folk music are consciously preserved by the people, such as singing for love (Xuong Singing), Khap Singing (Thai people), Gong and Drum Singing (Tho people), Pon Poong (Muong people), Ca sa Dancing (Thai people), Bamboo Dancing (Thai people), Turtle Dancing (Dao people), Gong performance, Dancing under the cotton tree, Khua Luong (Thai people), Lip Lute (Kho mu people)...

In the period of industrialization, modernization and integration, in addition to traditional community cultural activities, new community cultural activities have begun to appear. The appearance is the indispensable rule of development with outstanding activities such as fairs, exhibitions, professional arts programs, festivals ... The emerging community activities bring new values which are consistent with the development trend; however, their limitations are unavoidable. Therefore, it is required that the community must have the ability, the level of "selective reception" to enrich community cultural nuances.

2. CRITERIA FOR SELECTING SPECIFIC COMMUNITY CULTURAL ACTIVITIES:

The maintenance and organization of community cultural activities is not only of spiritual value, but also a driving force for the development of the community. To contribute to building the local community culture, the organization of community activities becomes important and urgent. However, because there is a large number of community cultural activities every year, it is necessary to select and classify specific and typical community activities to be regularly organized. In order to select typical community activities, a system of criteria for selection must be developed.

2.1. The basis for determining the criteria:

- Theoretical basis:

The determination of criteria to select specific community cultural activities, first of all, should be based on theoretical basis. This is considered an important foundation, because the theory is the accumulated experience, knowledge, and intelligence of different generations, helping the researcher help the researcher with the foundations and knowledge to argue and solve problems raised in the research. The system of theoretical bases is the "orbit" and "key" for the researcher to answer the questions and finally give the research results to ensure necessary scientific values.

The development of a criteria system that applies to the selection of community cultural activities should be based on basic theoretical bases:

+ Theory of community, cultural community, community culture, the organization and management of community cultural activities, objectives of community cultural development, content of community culture development;

+ The theory of building cultural life;

+ The theory of models and models of management and organization of cultural communities.

- Practical basis:

+ The mountainous region of Thanh Hoa has a large area, sparse population density, difficult economic life, poor cultural activities with most of cultural activities being organized in the villages.

+ The mountainous region of Thanh Hoa has various types of community cultural activities; however, due to the characteristics of the area, community cultural activities are infrequently organized in terms of space and time, while the people's needs and aspirations to enjoy and participate in community cultural activities in the region are very large.

+ The process of international integration has profoundly affected all aspects of social life, especially the cultural field in both positive and negative ways. Of which, the most concerned problem is the unsustainable and inconsistent development between culture and economy, between tradition and modernity...

Besides the theoretical and practical basis, the selection of community cultural activities should be consistent with the actual qualifications, economic, cultural and social conditions of the locality. It is necessary for the people to directly involved in building community cultural criteria in their localities without accepting subjective imposition or borrowing from the outside. Cultural standards must become a legal basis for all members of the community to voluntarily implement, test, evaluate and dismiss harmful signs to the community. The process must be based on the study of customs, conditions, and historical, cultural,

economic and social characteristics of the community. In addition, the deep understanding of the formation of community also helps to identify appropriate community cultural standards.

2.2. The system of criteria for selecting specific community activities:

* Specific criteria

+ Criterion 1: History of establishment, existence and development of cultural activities in the mountainous areas

Each ethnic group has a history of establishment and development. This process is not merely the existence, the development or the disappearance of a community, a people. Besides the history of establishment, existence and development, there are series of activities, including cultural activities, arising, taking place, and developing.

The historical factor is not only a prerequisite for the birth of community cultural activities, but also a determinant of the duration of existence and development of different community cultural activities in the life of each community or ethnic group. In addition, it is also one of the factors that directly affect the quality of community cultural activities. Each period of history goes through, the characteristics of socio-economic morphology have changed, adjusted with the impact of the institutional system and policies, the change in the need to enjoy cultural values, the emergence of new community cultural activities...

It can be said that history is the first factor that co-exists with community cultural activities. Moreover, the history is also an important factor that directly affects the adjustment, change or maintenance of community cultural activities.

+ Criterion 2: The nuances of ethnic groups

The mountainous region of Thanh Hoa is the homeland of 7 ethnic groups, of which the majority are ethnic minorities and the remaining are Kinh people. The terrain of residence and farming is high mountains, low mountains - semi-mountainous areas and valleys with the mode of production and cultivation being forestry, cultivation, husbandry and some other secondary jobs such as knitting, embroidery, and fishing... Therefore, it is not only based on the area of residence and production methods but also based on the customs and cultural tradition to build a model of community cultural activities. In other words, it is necessary to pay attention to the nuances of each ethnic group. For example, Thai and Muong people have stable settlements (sedentarization and settlement); Ethnic groups with a large population are the ones with long-standing traditional culture and unique cultural nuances. Besides, the Hmong, Dao ... entered Thanh Hoa later with low population; therefore, in the history, the Mong people have been practicing nomadic farming and life, which brings unique characteristics to the values of traditional culture and cultural nuances.

+ Criterion 3: The people's acceptance of community cultural activities from the past to the present

The acceptance of every local community in the locality is a condition for maintaining the sustainability of community cultural activities both in the past and the present.

The acceptance of local people depends on different factors: (1) Cultural activities of the community bring about a lot of historical, humanistic values with great spiritual value to each individual in particular and the community in general; (2) Community cultural activities are still consistent with the development trend of the times; (3) The activities have good connections with the community; (4) Through community cultural activities, each citizen has the chances to experience and acknowledge his position and values in the society.

+ Criterion 4: The era value of community cultural activities

For each cultural community activity, it cannot be separated from the interaction between the old - the new; the tradition - the modern... These interactions are objective and indispensable rule of development history. In the context of market economy and regional and global integration, it is necessary to accept and proactively and confidently integrate. Therefore, the acceptance of new cultural values to enrich cultural identity is required. However, it is also important to understand the trends of the era in preserving and promoting traditional cultural values to have appropriate methods as well as consider difficulties to forecast possible impacts on community cultural activities. On that basis, community cultural activities can be acquired, protected and promoted in an effective and sustainable way.

* Criteria frame:

From the criteria for selecting specific community cultural activities, the article provides a framework of evaluation criteria as follows:

Table: Criteria for evaluating community cultural activities

No.	Criteria	Objectives of criteria	Content of the implementation	Evaluation aspects
1	History of establishment, existence and development of cultural activities in the mountainous areas	Identify and make a list of available local community cultural activities	1. Survey, make statistic and classify community cultural activities by type	Sufficiency and specificity

			2. Clearly define the history of establishment and development of local community cultural activities	High reliability
			3. Revive community activities that have taken place in the past but have now been eradicated or no longer exist	High reliability
			4. Assess the current state of available community cultural activities in the locality	Objectivity, clarity, and specificity
2	The nuances of ethnic groups	Select community activities that are consistent with the historical traditions and cultural nuances of each ethnic group	1. Meet the village's heads and elders to get more information about ethnic culture and community cultural activities through each historical period	Specificity, objectivity, and science
			2. Pay attention to factors of costumes, beliefs, and folk knowledge... in selecting community cultural activities	History and sustainability
			3. Pay attention to factors of cultural exchange and acculturation in the history of establishment and development of ethnic groups	History and the dialectic
3	The people's acceptance of community cultural activities from the past to the present	Classify and identify typical community activities	1. Propagate and raise the people's awareness about community cultural activities	Frequency and sustainability
			2. Classify community cultural activities: (1) Traditional community cultural activities; (2) New community cultural activities. Sort them by enjoyment needs of age, gender...	Objectiveness and science
			3. Assess the needs of the people for existing community cultural activities (both traditional and new community activities). Forecast demands for enjoyment, and participation in community cultural activities in the future	Logic, objectiveness and sufficiency
4	The era value of community cultural activities	Select community cultural activities that are both historical and in line with the development trend	1. Forecast people's participation in community cultural activities	Logic and science
			2. Forecast the difficulty and the disappearance or backwardness of some contents in community cultural activities	Logic, science and suitability
			3. Forecast the impacts of new types of community cultural activities on typical traditional community cultural activities	Logic, science and feasibility

3. MODEL OF ORGANIZING AND MANAGING COMMUNITY CULTURAL ACTIVITIES:

A model is a basic element that makes up things through which these things can be reconstructed according to a general principle that makes things remain unchanged even though they still contain diverse differences in specific conditions.

The model is not a formula, a pattern that can be applied anytime, anywhere. That means that depending on specific conditions of space and time, people can enrich and diversify through the practice of building a model while preserving its most basic structure.

Up to now, there is no concept of organizational and managerial model of community cultural activities. However, to build a theoretical model of organization and management of community cultural activities in mountainous districts of Thanh Hoa province, it is necessary to format the model based on concept, or explanation of terminology. The author believes that Theoretical model of organizing and managing community cultural activities in mountainous areas of Thanh Hoa province is a model determined on the basis of the criteria for selecting typical community cultural activities. Accordingly, an appropriate, long-term and sustainable "operating framework" has been built for each locality. The theoretical model is the detailed description of how to organize, and manage community cultural activities.

For mountainous districts of Thanh Hoa, it is necessary to build a "standard and appropriate" theoretical model for organizing and managing community cultural activities.

In terms of perspective: The model should be consistent with the content of the ongoing local movements: Building cultural titles (cultural families; cultural villages, hamlets, ...); Building new rural areas ... The model of community cultural activities will contribute to improving the quality of ongoing movements, effectively preserve and promote the traditional cultural values of ethnic groups in mountainous areas, and create motivation for local people to develop economic activities.

On the basis of the criteria for selecting typical community cultural activities, along with practical basis, the theoretical model "Organization and management of community cultural activities in mountainous districts of Thanh Hoa province" should be implemented with the following specific contents, tasks/activities:

3.1. Tasks belonging to management activities:

+ Establish a Steering Committee to manage and deploy the model: Members of the Steering Committee: Vice Chairman of the Commune People's Committee (head of the committee); Local cultural management officer (standing member); Commissioners: Representative of Youth Union, Women, National Front, Representatives of the people (01 prestigious village's elder or head and 01 dynamic and enthusiastic unionist in villages). The Steering Committee for management and implementation of the model can take human resources from the Steering Committee of movements to properly arrange with the current situation of each locality.

+ Build and complete the system of cultural institutions according to regulations and on schedule: with the aims in which institutions of culture and sports in the villages meet people's needs of creation, learning, exchanging, enjoying, training sports as well as play a pivotal role in organizing the activities to propagate local political and social duties.

+ Select human resources to meet professional requirements: Develop and select people with professional qualifications, talents in culture, arts, physical training and sports to be regularly trained and fostered cultural and sports skills to effectively organize activities and promote cultural institutions in the villages such as cultural houses, reading rooms, radio and sports yards, etc. to meet the needs of cultural enjoyment and creation of ethnic minorities.

+ Building regulations on organization and management of community cultural activities: the management of community cultural activities is a conscious activity of localities, cultural-social officials at all levels and relevant members to organize, guide, and check the implementation of community cultural activities in a way that is consistent with the guidelines and policies of the Party and laws of the Government, local socio-economic development orientations, cultural life and fine traditions and customs to improve the people's spiritual life. Annually, socio-cultural officials at all levels should elaborate regulations on the management of community cultural activities in their localities, with specific contents to advise all managerial levels in order that community cultural activities in the locality are well-managed. In addition, it is necessary to depend on the nature of community cultural activities (traditional, annual or new activities) to effectively organize and implement these community cultural activities³.

Method: Develop regulations for the implementation of community cultural activities in two methods: (1) For traditional community cultural activities; (2) For new community cultural activities. In which, for traditional community cul-

tural activities, the activities taking place in cultural institutions must ensure the similarity with the institution's operational regulations. For new community cultural activities, the regulations should be comprehensive, flexible, appropriate, and applicable even when there is a rapid change.

Content: Implement community cultural activities by categorizing into groups:

- The group of typical community cultural activities are participated by the majority of the community. For this group of activities, for example, sports and arts, it is necessary to have the plans to be annually organized. Besides, the ways of organizing should be changed to increase the activities' attractiveness.

- The group of community cultural activities is being gradually lost or not well participated. For this group of activities, it is necessary to pay attention to propaganda for better participation and preserve to avoid future "disappearance" of the activities.

- The group of new community cultural activities will be implemented according to each specific plan and actual situation.

In order to develop appropriate and practical regulations, socio-cultural officials at all levels need to conduct surveys and statistics on the number of traditional and annual community cultural activities or newly arising activities in recent years according to a specific chronological order of the year. Each activity must contain sufficient information on: (i) Name of activity; (ii) Time of organization: specify day, month, year; (iii) Organizers: (individual, collective, Management Board); (iv) Location: specify location (commune, village, hamlet,...); (v) Meaning, purpose, content, method and scale of the activity; (vi) Type of activity. After completing the management plan, the socio-cultural officials at all levels are responsible for making a general report on the plan of organization and management of activities in the year and submitting to the People's Committee at all levels for consideration and approval of the implementation on that basis⁴.

+ Develop and promulgate village codes and regulations (inherit and select positive values of the community's regulations).

Village codes and regulations are documents that stipulate rules of conduct established and voluntarily agreed upon by the villagers to regulate the self-governing social relations of the communities and are recognized by competent agencies. These village codes and regulations are in accordance with the provisions of law, local customs and practices.

The contents of the village codes and regulations are clearly stipulate what the people are obliged to know and discuss such as the Party's guidelines and policies, the State's laws on economic development and infrastructure construction; culture, education, health, population and birth-control policy; the building of a civilized lifestyle and cultural family; maintenance of social order and security-social safety; rewards and penalties; construction, management and use of funds. Villages actively integrate democratic regulations into formulating village codes and regulations on cultural lifestyle. For example, according to the village codes and regulations, child marriage is prohibited; young men and women must get married at the prescribed age and go to the People's Committee of the commune to register certificate of marriage, not allowed child marriage... Besides, to eliminate backward customs and practices, and superstition, it is stipulated that dead bodies are not allowed to keep indoors for more than 48 hours; expensive rituals at funerals must be eliminated... Moreover, village codes and regulations also mention solidarity, harmony, and mutual affection among all clans. All people in the villages have the responsibility to help orphans, the old, the weak, people and families in difficult circumstances and to contribute to common affairs of villages, hamlets and communities.

3.2. Tasks belonging to the operational organization:

+ Well organize cultural, arts, physical training and sports activities associated with the movement "Uniting people to build cultural life" and the campaign "Joining hands to build a new countryside", "Implementing local democracy"...; Maintain and gradually improve the quality and effectiveness of cultural and sport activities in order to create positive changes in awareness and actions of officials, party members and all the people; Promote the cultural traditions of different peoples and villages; Protect and develop forests in particular and the environment in general; Contribute to building villages for sustainable development.

+ Organize training programs conducted by the local authorities periodically or flexibly according to different tasks.

- Organize training on how to hold and manage community cultural activities in mountainous districts of Thanh Hoa province.

Target audience: Steering committee for movement; village officials; Party Cell secretary; Secretary of Youth Union.

- Organize training for local people to raise awareness and understanding of local community cultural activities.

Target audience: Villagers.

Method: It can be carried out in different methods: Integrate training programs with conferences; Organize independent training programs.

Training content and materials: Training content is focused on community cultural activities such as history of establishment, cultural values, spiritual values... The materials are used to disseminate community cultural activities in remote, difficult and mountainous communes... in order to improve the material and spiritual life for people. Cultural departments at all levels should provide training materials of community cultural activities to people to read and understand the content of these activities. The training materials must have content that is easy to understand, easy to remember and able to create the initiative for people; provide people with basic knowledge about community culture and main community cultural activities. This will help people to be more aware and improve their responsibility to participate in these activities locally.

It is necessary to annually update, supplement, and adjust the training materials that are in accordance with changes in local real situation (if any). These materials also need to have easy-to-understand and concise content about community cultural activities. Moreover, the training materials should be printed to deliver to each household at different times before the cultural activities in order that people can update information, get the time of organizing the activities to actively and effectively participate.

+ Compile and broadcast propaganda articles about community cultural activities

Target audience: Villagers

Method: Write and edit in details of community cultural activities; broadcast or record disc; live broadcast of the programs community cultural activities of the district, province and central.

Languages: Standard Vietnamese and ethnic minority languages.

Content: Description of community cultural activities or introduction of the value of community cultural activities to the lives of local people. In particular, ethnic factors and nuances should be focused.

+ Restore the lost community cultural activities

Method: Based on the list of community cultural activities gathered and analyzed according to Activity 1, identify community activities that have been gradually lost or completely lost in the historical development process.

Content: (1) Organize conferences, seminars and identify activities to be restored; (2) Develop restoration planning; (3) Call for socialization to ensure financial and other resources as planned; (4) Carry out restoration; (5) Assess the results and integrate community cultural activities into the local activity chain.

4. CONCLUSION:

The vitality of culture primarily depends on cultural activities, in which community cultural activities have a strong spread. The well-organized community cultural activities not only contribute to preserving the cultural values of each locality, but also bringing an environment in which new cultural values are created. In addition, community cultural activities are also the means of closely connecting people.

The mountainous region of Thanh Hoa is a difficult area in all aspects, in which people increasingly desire more meaningful community cultural activities. However, due to the historical factor, the strong development of the market economy, the global cultural exchanges have greatly affected the community culture of the mountainous districts of Thanh Hoa.

The development of criteria to select specific community cultural activities is also a form of preserving and bringing culture closer to the people. And in order to have effective community cultural activities, it is essential to build a theoretical model as a basis to be applied in practice in the localities./

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Khua Luong - A folk performing art

The Thai ethnic group, Tam Van commune, Lang Chanh district,
Thanh Hoa province
Source: Authors, 2018



Bamboo dancing

The Thai ethnic group, Tam Van commune, Thanh Hoa province
Source: Authors, 2018